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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to get an overview of the status of publication management courses and programs in journalism education. A one-page questionnaire containing eight questions was mailed to the deans, directors, and department heads and chairpersons of all U.S. journalism departments and schools listed in the January 1974 issue of "Journalism Educator." The survey results showed that management-type courses are taught at slightly less than half the journalism schools and departments, and about seven percent of those schools have a structured major or sequence for those who anticipate a career in print media management; most journalism educators personally feel there is a need for these kinds of courses in the journalism curriculum; and journalism schools and department are hard pressed these days to keep up with demands to offer sufficient sections of basic offerings. (RB)

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PUBLICATION MANAGEMENT: JOURNALISM EDUCATION'S STEPCHILD?

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Publication management appears to be something of a stepchild at journalism schools, both as a course offering and a structured major. About half the journalism educators polled recently indicated that students showed interest in the publication management area, while about 80 per cent of the educators felt that this kind of course should be a regular offering.

These are among the findings of a survey on the status of publication management courses and programs at schools and departments of journalism in the United States. Other answers indicated a lack of enthusiasm for the available teaching materials and showed that those who teach these kinds of courses are qualified by professional experience, in the main.

Objectives

This study was undertaken to get an overview of the status of publication management courses and programs in journalism education. Motivating factors were several, and included a personal interest on the part of the author, apparent renewed interest on the part of some media organizations such as the American Newspapers Publishers Association, frequent comments and inquiries from professionals, and the reality that reporters and copy editors often become managers of one kind or another, usually without any formal preparation for that role.

Methodology

A one-page questionnaire containing eight questions was mailed to the deans, directors and department heads and chairmen of all U.S. journalism departments and schools listed in the January, 1974, Journalism

Educator. Of 163 questionnaires mailed, 118 -- 73 per cent -- were completed and returned. Some questions were not answered at all or not answered completely, resulting in different totals for various questions.

Findings

Question 1: Do you offer courses in publication management? Yes, 45 per cent (n=54); no, 55 per cent (n=64).

Of those who answered yes, 36 schools reported offering one course in this area, 13 two, and one each reported offering either three, four or five courses. Many respondents indicated that some of this kind of material was routinely worked into the curricula of other courses such as reporting, editing, or various survey courses.

Where there is a separate course, the title varies. Typical are Media Management, Newspaper Management, Community and Suburban Press, the Community Newspaper, Newspaper Operation, Newspaper Editorial Management, Magazine Management, Newspaper Advertising and Business Management, and Publications Management.

There do appear to be changes afoot at some of the schools that offer such courses. One -- the University of Kansas -- is changing Advertising Management to Media Management. Northern Illinois University has changed Media Management to a Newspaper Management course, to provide an in-depth knowledge of daily newspaper management. General problems of media economics are covered in other courses at NIU.

Question 2: How often do you offer such courses? Eighty-five per cent (n-45) offered them at least once a year; 9.4 per cent every other

year, and 5.7 per cent less frequently. Enrollment is generally small: 79 per cent (n-34) said class size was 25 or less; 21 per cent (n=9) indicated classes enrolled 26 to 50 students each time they were offered.

Question 3: Do you offer a structured program or sequence for students interested in newspaper or publication management careers? Only 7 per cent said yes--eight schools. These included the University of Maine, University of Missouri, University of Georgia, Mankato (Minn.) State University, University of Oregon, University of Mississippi, Troy State University and Tulsa University. Three others indicated programs on the drawing board.

Question 4: Do students express interest in having these courses taught? Yes, 48 per cent (n=51); no, 52 per cent (n=55).

Although student interest, reflected through journalism educators, was ambivalent, several comments were both interesting and revealing. One respondent indicated that the course "had never been taught well." Another said that students "demand it (a management course)." And another said that although there was little interest from students during their college years, "They do (get interested in management) about three years after they graduate." This sums up one impediment to increased student interest, the fact that most students just don't realize that they may wind up in management positions within a few years of graduation. Dozier Cade, director of the University of Tennessee School of Journalism, said that he thought the "main reason for students' non-interest is that they start out as reporters or desk men/women and don't get into management usually until quite a few years later. If students knew there was a job

market (if there really is) for management people when they got out of school, they might be more interested in taking such courses."

Question 5: Do you sense a need for these courses in the journalism curriculum? Yes, 73 per cent (n=82); no, 27 per cent (n=30).

The feeling of most respondents probably was reflected in a comment from Richard G. Gray, chairman of the Indiana University Department of Journalism: "More and more of our graduates are moving into management positions which call for far more sophisticated preparation than merely editorial training. The managing editor of the future, for example, will be the production manager, too, as the new technology comes into play."

Yet, there are those "purists" who feel a dichotomy between the practice of journalism and its management. Said one journalism school director who represents this viewpoint: "I don't think we should go beyond preparing future professionals. Publishers are their 'natural enemies' and that's a healthy condition. Professionals should appreciate and know something about the economics of the media. We try to see to that in our mass communication and society-type courses."

Question 6: Do publishers, editors and media managers express an interest in the need for these courses in the curriculum? Yes, 60.6 per cent (n=66); no, 39.4 per cent (n=43).

Although one respondent said that most of the pressure comes from publisher types and their organizations, rather than "working journalists" and their groups, most agreed that professionals of one kind or another do express interest in this area, sometimes as a result of their felt weaknesses as managers, because of a lack or preparation.

Question 7: Are textbooks, collateral readings and other teaching materials for such a course adequate and readily available? Yes, 44.9 per cent (n=40); no, 55.1 per cent (n=49).

The mixed reaction to the teaching materials is backed by comments criticizing the dated nature of much of the material, particularly texts. One respondent ventured the opinion that too often a narrow approach to newspaper management -- that is, treating it as a special case of business management -- hampered the effectiveness of such courses, and was also a fault of the available texts. Unavailability of the specialized periodicals required as reading in such a course was cited as a problem, particularly for small college libraries. One educator recommended the development of more visual aids, and another said more economic data was necessary. One respondent commented: "The problem with the available materials is that you are faced either with material put together by the industry, which is self-serving and has important gaps, or with the handful of textbooks which are dull and fail to relate management, etc. to larger issues."

But, said another, there are many materials available -- often free -- from ANPA, Audit Bureau of Circulation, the International Circulation Managers Association and others. In addition, it was noted that publishers generally welcome plant tours, and speakers from various departments of newspaper and other publishing organizations usually are available for class appearances. At least part of the resources problem, then, is pulling the available people and materials together in a meaningful way.

Question 8: How much media management experience does the faculty member have who usually teaches the course? Of those teaching such a course, 83.3 per cent (n=45) were reported to have five or more years of experience. Thirteen per cent (n=7) were reported to have less than five years experience in the field. And finally, 2 per cent claimed no experience in the media management field.

It would appear, then, that where media management type courses are taught, the instructors have a minimum foundation of experience on which to build their teaching. At least several respondents indicated that they relied heavily on working professionals, either as adjunct/part-time faculty members or as resources for teaching these courses. William E. Hall, Ohio State University Journalism School director, reported that the general manager and purchasing agent of Cox newspapers in Dayton -- both former managing editors -- teamed to teach the course at OSU. These men in turn called upon other departmental managers from their newspapers as resource persons. Wrote Hall: "We don't feel this is the type of course any one man can teach well. (There are) too many ramifications (and) too many areas tied together under the management heading."

The refrain of experience is a familiar one. At the University of Nevada the course is taught by the former owner of a five-newspaper chain. At the University of Georgia, the general manager of a nearby suburban daily teaches the management course. At Northern Arizona University, editors and publishers are pulled in to assist in teaching the course, and they are happy to do so.

Conclusions

Management-type courses are taught at slightly less than half the journalism schools and departments in the United States, and only about 7 per cent of those schools have a structured major or sequence for those who anticipate a career in print media management. Where these courses are taught, enrollment is not particularly heavy, usually with sections of 25 or fewer students. Most of the instructors for these courses appear, however, to be qualified to do this kind of teaching because of substantial managerial background.

Most journalism educators seem personally to feel there is a need for these kinds of courses in the curriculum. They also report fairly strong interest on the part of editors and publishers, even though student pressure for such offerings is ambivalent. A key question might be: If there appears to be a need for these courses, and if graduates do, indeed, wind up in managerial positions, why don't journalism schools pay more heed to this long-range need?

Several possible answers emerge.

*Journalism schools and departments are hard pressed these days to keep up with demands to offer sufficient sections of basic offerings, be they newswriting, intro to mass media, or advertising copywriting. Overwhelmed by sheer numbers, courses and programs which may be regarded as having lower priority get less attention than they might otherwise.

*The 25 per cent limitation on journalism courses for accreditation purposes works against adding "just one more course" to the required list, and probably keeps the management offerings on the low side.

*Staffing such courses requires an expertise which many educators frankly admit they don't have on their staffs. Though many journalism educators have broad media experience, they can't offer expertise in all of the many sub-fields of mass media professions. Smaller schools particularly are caught in this bind. No doubt it makes sense to not offer a course where there is no teaching expertise, or to engage an outsider when the funds are available to offer the course.

*Student interest and demand frequently can provide impetus for either individual courses or structured programs (witness the rise of Black Studies departments and various courses with the word "Women" in the title). That demand apparently is not present in publication management. Budding journalists seldom view themselves as anything but writers or reporters (it's hard enough to interest them in the work of the copy-reader, much less editor or publisher). When they realize, a few years out of j-school, that they might have used a course or two in the management area, either in or out of journalism departments, it's too late. They have to pick up management background on the job.

A comment from Neale Copple, director of the University of Nebraska School of Journalism, may sum things up: "What you are getting at is something that none of us get at very well. I would be the first to confess that we are weak in this field and are trying to do something about it...Right now it is a top priority item that is fighting for attention with several other top priority items."

What can be done?

First, it must be agreed that it is not preordained that all reporters will become publishers, or that they must be encouraged to do so. At the same time, some of the realities of media economics and managerial problems should be pointed out to all journalism majors, and probably are at most schools, in one or more courses. Publication/media management courses and programs will never assume a very large fraction of the journalism curriculum, but this is not an excuse for their complete neglect.

Second, even smaller schools could give consideration to getting a publication/media/newspaper management course "on the books," to be offered when money, time and talent become available. Buttonholing area media executives to staff such a course (gratis, perhaps) would be a means to an end for those small departments who can't be all things to all journalism majors.

Third, an integrated approach would appear to be the most realistic and effective; that is, media management should be viewed in the general perspective of both management problems and media realities. The resources of a business school are an obvious asset--necessity, even--for a school which wants to structure an entire program. A strong minor in accounting, personnel administration, finance, etc. in conjunction with just one or two journalism-taught courses might provide the basis for such a program, as has been done in several schools.

Fourth, professional media organizations such as ANPA must continue to provide impetus and support, both at the national and local levels. Cooperating with journalism schools, they may be able to provide a solution to the apparent weaknesses in teaching resources and materials.

The first fruits of the ANPA Foundation Task Force on Newspaper Economics and Management should be a boon in this area. Stewart MacDonald of the ANPA Foundation reports that the Task Force has determined that the lack of adequate materials is one of the handicaps faced by journalism education and that the Foundation has commissioned a basic text in newspaper economics. It is being developed by Dr. Jon Udell of the University of Wisconsin Business School; a manuscript is expected to be ready near the end of the year.

A unified source list/bibliography would also be an aid, and it might well include the names of qualified executives who would be available to schools, much as the Newspaper Fund provides editors-in-residence on the editorial side.

While this author does not advocate that every school or department of journalism become "management oriented," there does seem to be much more that could be done without compromising the basic goal of educating future journalists. If we can somehow fulfill the difficult dual role of preparing journalists who also will be effective managers, we may do more than we realize to improve mass media over the long run.

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